

News Release



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"A man that don't love a horse, there is something the matter with him" ~ Will Rogers

CA State Parks Turns Back the Clock to When Horses Dominated the Landscape at Will Rogers State Historic Park

PACIFIC PALISADES – California State Parks is tearing up asphalt this week to recreate a historic horse corral as part of the ongoing \$5 million restoration at Will Rogers Historic State Park.

When Henry Ford introduced the V-8 engine, Will Rogers was reminding people of a simpler time when horses still held center stage. It is particularly poignant, then that this week California State Parks is ripping up an asphalt parking lot in favor of a dirt field to restore a horse corral that once belonged to the world famous American cowboy. With the planned completion of a replica barn and corral named after his youngest son Jimmy, horses will again roam where they have not stood in more than 60 years.

"We are turning back the clock so that everyone can experience his way of life on the ranch for generations to come," said Director Ruth Coleman.

The public is invited to help celebrate the three-year restoration of the house and grounds on March 25, titled "Welcome Back to the Ranch." Just 30 minutes from downtown Los Angeles, the event includes musical entertainment, tours, a barbeque, horseback riding and a Masonic cornerstone laying ceremony for the newly built replica of Jimmy's Barn and corral.

The final touches are being made on the barn and corral, where Jim Rogers stabled his polo horses. Will Roger's widow, Betty, had it dismantled in the 1940s to donate the wood for a relative's home during wartime lumber rationing. The reconstruction project, funded by the non-profit Will Rogers Cooperative Association, was made easier when excavators discovered original counter posts still in the ground. Historic photographs were used as a guide.

The replica barn was built as a way to reintroduce horses on the property while protecting the original historic structures. The 12-parking spaces lost by park employees will now provide limited, short-term housing for horseback riding services offered to the public. Horseback riding lessons were reintroduced on Friday on another part of the property, where they will continue to be offered until the barn and corral are completed.

"My great grandfather loved horses," said Jennifer Rogers. "They provided him a way to escape from his busy Hollywood life. Here at the ranch he enjoyed riding in the hills behind his home as well as playing polo on his private polo field."

Learn more online at Will Rogers State Historic Park <http://www.parks.ca.gov/willrogers>

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